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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 62

Social development, including questions related to the world social situation and youth, ageing disabled persons and the family

Two plenary meetings devoted to the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and Beyond

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/61, A/60/133, A/60/133/Corr.1 and A/60/156)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.2)

The President: I am very pleased, as President of the General Assembly, to see a record number of youth representatives in the national delegations to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. It is a good start. Their presence is concrete evidence of the revitalization and rejuvenation often called for in these halls. It is also an encouraging indication of a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in the implementation and evaluation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Not only are they here, reminding us of the importance of youth being part of the decision-making processes in the world, but they are also bringing the plight of young people around the world into these halls. They are also bringing realities that we need to be aware of.

In the 10 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, there have been notable achievements, including on gender issues and in the field of education. However, much remains do be done, not least for girls in education. As the "World Youth Report 2005" — the report of the Secretary-General — so vividly describes, many young people today continue to suffer poverty, discrimination and inequality, and far too great a number still lack access to proper education and health services. Most of those who become infected with HIV/AIDS are in their teens or early twenties. In many areas, rampant unemployment dulls their ambition and undermines morale, and we know that civil conflict can have a particularly devastating effect on the young. We need only look at the outrageous phenomenon of child soldiers.

Although the World Programme of Action for Youth is still highly relevant today, in the 10 years that have passed since its adoption new challenges have emerged. In the mid-1990s, few could have predicted the enormous impact that globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, conflict and intergenerational relations would have on young people. Those issues will need substantive commitment and action as emerging areas of concern.

In addition to policies and programmes developed specifically for youth, the needs of young people must be better reflected in broader development agendas. A few weeks ago, the world's leaders gathered here to review progress towards the Millennium Development

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Goals and the reform process facing the United Nations. Intensified commitment and investment now in the Millennium Development Goals will have enormous benefits for the young people of 2015 and future generations.

Young people should be seen as our partners and a positive force in achieving the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. As one of the youth representatives so eloquently said yesterday at the informal, interactive round table in which I participated, the current young generation should be not the next one to fail, but the first to succeed in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. That is a challenge we should all accept, and let us now do our part to make it happen. I am sure that this meeting will bring that energy into the processes that are so necessary.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am delighted to be here today for this meeting on a subject as inspiring as it is important, and I wish to extend a special welcome to all the young representatives who are with us today.

We are gathered here because we know that young people are our future. They will inherit what we create in our time, both good and bad. Just as the United Nations Charter was written for succeeding generations, so is our present agenda intended to give those who succeed us a chance to build better lives. That applies especially to the Millennium Development Goals, which fall due 10 years from now.

Today, almost half the world's population is less than 25 years old. Mr. President, you have just shared with us the basic challenges they already face, as described in the Secretary-General's "World Youth Report 2005", released earlier this week. The challenges include 200 million youth living in poverty; 130 million youth illiterate; 88 million unemployed; and 10 million young people living with HIV/AIDS. We should add to that the distressing statistics about children, who will make up the youth of 2015. A quarter of all children in the developing world are malnourished, as are half of all children living in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia; 11 million children under the age of five die each year from preventable and treatable diseases; and 115 million children are currently not in school.

All those factors bring home to us the need to redouble our efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Today, we mark the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The adoption of that document was a milestone in that it was the first global blueprint for effective national policies on youth. It highlighted 10 priority areas, drawn together in a comprehensive and practical policy plan.

In the 10 years that have passed since, dramatic changes have taken place that have had profound effects on the lives of young people — from the consequences of globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technology to the devastating spread of HIV/AIDS.

Those upheavals only serve to underline the need for young people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives — a principle that forms one of the priorities of the World Programme of Action. I am delighted that, today, the General Assembly is acting to put that principle into practice by inviting a youth representative to address the Assembly and report to it the results of the round-table discussion held yesterday with young leaders. Allow me to recognize Ms. Itzel Barrera de Diego, who will report to the Assembly in a moment. I look forward to hearing from her.

Above all, I hope this occasion will be followed by concrete action out there on the ground, where it matters most. Real youth participation must come at every level — locally, regionally and nationally.

On this tenth anniversary, let us recognize that young people form an enormous resource for the benefit of society; that they are crucial partners in our work to reach the Millennium Development Goals; and that their energy is our most valuable asset in our efforts to build a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous world.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her reminder that we should always keep before us the realities out there in the field. I am sure that participants here will bring those realities into this Hall.

I now give the floor to Ms. Itzel Barrera de Diego, who, as youth representative of Mexico, will present a summary of the informal, interactive round-table discussion held yesterday afternoon on the theme "Young people: making commitments matter".

Ms. Barrera de Diego (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Many generations have had the opportunity to eradicate poverty, but we will be the first to succeed.

In accordance with resolution 59/148, and in response to its request to present a summary of the round-table discussion on making commitments matter, the youth representatives have asked me to present those results.

As members know, the discussion was organized around the three areas into which the 15 youth priorities were categorized. The format was interactive, allowing many delegations and representatives of non-governmental organizations to air their views.

First, with respect to youth and its relationship to the global economy, the disparities and difficulties of integration were of widespread concern. Marginalization resulting from the lack of access to new communications technology and high-quality universal education were only a few of the issues repeatedly raised. Efforts to narrow the gap between rural and urban development and proposals concerning self-employment were also frequently cited.

The issue of making agriculture an attractive and profitable activity as a solution to rural exodus and unemployment was strongly contrasted with the droughts and political realities in certain countries. We must point out that agriculture is not the only solution for rural development. Other ways to approach that challenge must therefore be found.

Secondly, the subject of youth and civil society was the focus of most of the debate, demonstrating that there is no link between young people and apathy. The world's young people are using their leisure time to become involved in volunteer work. We are developing innovative and concrete responses to the challenges we face. We are demonstrating the ability to relate to marginalized groups. Those approaches, together with the knowledge of previous generations, will have unprecedented results in terms of successful integration policies.

In that connection, and in keeping with the need to be active participants in our own processes, we propose the following: the creation of a United Nations youth advisory council based on voluntarism, so that it will not represent a financial burden for the Organization; a mandate of helping Member States bring youth delegates to participate in General Assembly sessions; and the inclusion of a youth perspective in public policies through national youth councils.

Because of the factors I have cited, an alarming number of young people find themselves in at-risk situations. Moreover, there are cases of young people suffering from problems related to poor health, HIV/AIDS infection, drug abuse, youth delinquency and involvement in armed conflict, all at the same time. The assumption that young people's health is indestructible is a misconception that not only delays, but in many cases hinders, the establishment of preventive health programmes.

It is important to point out that countries need effective demobilization and reintegration programmes for young people involved in armed conflicts. We urge countries that have successful programmes to share their experiences with the international community. However, the implementation of such programmes will be very difficult without the necessary resources.

We also need to point out that the violent stereotypes that have stigmatized young people for so long were countered by the mere presence of all of us in this forum. We must understand that we are the potential, the solution, the force for change — and I say "must" because young people and adults must understand what youth means: it means potential energy, the solutions. But that potential energy must be utilized and protected. Therefore, we urge all Governments to support the institutionalization of youth participation at all levels, and we welcome the efforts to conclude a United Nations convention on the rights of young people.

Finally, I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that this round table enabled us to recognize not only our differences, but also the similarities of the challenges that must be faced by young people throughout the world. These are needs that know no geographic, linguistic or gender barriers or any other distinctions, and therefore require our immediate attention and resolution.

We are privileged young people. We are here 10 years after the establishment of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, but in very different conditions. Yes, members of the General Assembly, the difference lies in the fact that this time, with your help, we will not have to wait another 10 years to have the privilege to address you.

Many generations have had the opportunity to eradicate poverty, but we will be the first to be successful.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.2.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): On the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, it is a great honour for Portugal to present draft resolution A/60/L.2, entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth", on behalf of the 49 sponsors listed in that document and the following additional countries, which have joined the list: Argentina, Bangladesh, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Iceland, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, the Sudan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States of America and Uruguay.

Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, that we are once again reaffirming the World Programme of Action is an important milestone. Participation by young people at all levels of society, stronger partnerships aimed at increasing investment in young people and holistic and integrated youth policies are just a few of the tools identified in this draft resolution that can enable us to move forward and create a better world for the younger generation. We also believe that better and more expeditious coordination among the organizations, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system can play a key role in that regard. In addition, we recognize the important work being done by the Youth Employment Network and encourage Member States, the United Nations and partner organizations to strengthen and expand the Network at its various levels.

The five priority areas identified in the Secretary-General's *World Youth Report 2003* (*E/CN.5/2003/4*) — namely, the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; use of and access to information and communication technologies; the dramatic increase in human immunodeficiency virus infection among young people and the epidemic's impact on their lives; active involvement by young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators; and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society — are established in the draft resolution as additional priorities of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In that regard, we look forward to the supplement to the World Programme of Action, which will be presented to us at the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development.

It gives me great pleasure to have so many youth representatives present here today in the Assembly. That is testimony to the valuable role and input that young people can have in the work of our Organization and in society as a whole. Young people must be heard; they must be considered as part of the solution, not as the problem.

I would like to introduce the following revisions to the draft resolution. We would like to amend paragraph 10 to read as follows:

> "Invites all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute, inter alia, to the United Nations Youth Fund for the participation of youth representatives in national delegations, in particular from developing countries".

We would also like to add a new operative paragraph 11 bis, which reads as follows:

> "Calls on Governments, the United Nations system, youth organizations and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen efforts aimed at implementation of the 10 priority areas contained in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond".

Last but not least, my delegation would like to thank all delegations that participated in the negotiations on this important text for their efforts and cooperation. I think that, as a result, we have achieved a text that will move us forward. We hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus with the broad support of all delegations.

The President: Before calling on the first speaker in the debate, I would like to turn to several organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of this meeting. In my letter of 29 September to all Permanent Representatives, I urged speakers to limit their

statement in this debate to four minutes. In view of the large number of delegations already on the list of speakers — 48 so far — I appeal to speakers to cooperate in this respect. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the rostrum, which functions as follows. A green light will be activated at the start, an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the four minutes and a red light will be activated when the four-minute limit has elapsed. I recall that a similar rule was also applied at the summit meeting for our Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. It is an acceptable practice which I hope will be respected.

Mr. McGhee (United Kingdom): In the interest of brevity, I shall deliver only part of my statement as prepared. The full text will be circulated in writing. I have the honour, in my capacity as United Kingdom youth delegate to the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, to present this statement on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Norway, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union warmly welcomes this opportunity to join with other Member States, civil society and all youth delegates present here today in celebrating the progress made in achieving greater opportunities for young people. But the European Union also recognizes that many challenges remain, challenges that were highlighted in the 10 priority areas of the World Programme of Action, as well as in the five new priorities identified in the World Youth Report 2003. Today provides the occasion to reaffirm our shared commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth and to addressing the needs of young people all over the world.

The year 2005 has been a crucial year for advancing the opportunities for young people at the international level. The recent millennium review summit reinforced the international community's commitment to young people. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will shape the world in which today's children will reach adulthood, and many of the Goals address issues of central concern for young people now, such as poverty, education, employment and HIV/AIDS. The European Union welcomes the work of UNICEF, which is the leading United Nations organization for young people, and pays tribute to UNICEF for driving this agenda forward.

The European Union remains committed to the biggest social challenge of the twenty-first century: the elimination of poverty. The European Union is committed to doubling its development assistance by 2010. Significant steps have also been taken to reduce the burden of debt on the most heavily indebted poor countries. All these steps will help lift young people from poverty.

But further progress must be made. The European Union calls upon all donors to move speedily towards the goal of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for development assistance and upon developing country Governments to prepare ambitious national poverty reduction strategies that recognize the specific needs of young people. The European Union welcomes the fact that young people are increasingly being consulted in drafting Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. But a great deal more needs to be done to highlight the needs of young people. Youth should be mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategies and young people must be consulted on policy relating to those strategies.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. Youth unemployment rates are typically two to three times higher than for others, and young women are particularly at risk. Decent work is the most effective way out of poverty. The European Union urges an increased commitment to youth employment initiatives at national and international levels and is itself working to attract more people into employment and to reduce unemployment as one of Europe's top priorities.

The European Union welcomes the progress made by the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network and encourages its further expansion to facilitate the implementation of national action plans for youth employment. There is much to learn via this network through exchanging experiences and ideas from both developed and developing countries. Practical implementation on the ground will be of critical importance in the coming year.

To help meet its commitment to youth employment, the European Union is investing more in human capital through better education and skills, including through the European Youth Pact for Young

People adopted in February 2005. Education is crucial if young people are to be able to benefit from employment opportunities. In 2000, over 100 million primary-school-age children all over the world were still not in education, and over 100 million young people lacked effective reading and writing skills. Efforts must be redoubled to meet the Millennium Goals for education by investing in quality education that will enable all young people, boys and girls, to attain decent work as a first step towards competing effectively in today's global economy.

The European Union fully recognizes the critical contribution that young people can make to decision-making. Education plays a crucial role in providing young people with the skills needed for active citizenship. The inclusion of young people in so many delegations here today is evidence of the improving dialogue between Governments and young people and the incorporation of their valuable input on issues that affect them.

Across the European Union, there are an increasing number of youth programmes aimed at developing cooperation on a wide range of activities between young people in different Member States and beyond. Bringing together young people from different backgrounds and from different countries helps combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Young people are key to creating the tolerant society in which we all want to live.

In addition to its continued strong support of the 10 priorities identified in the World Programme of Action in 1995, the European Union also attaches critical importance to the five additional areas identified in the World Youth Report 2003. Addressing exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage in regard to youth is of fundamental importance if the European Union is to meet its vision of a Europe — and a world — that is socially inclusive as well as economically dynamic.

And, of course, all this needs to happen with the full and effective participation of young people. We must be recognized as partners in this work. We are a positive force for social and economic development. Youth issues should not be considered in isolation from those of other generations.

I would like to briefly finish with some personal comments on behalf of the young people in the United Kingdom.

Before coming to New York, the three United Kingdom youth representatives undertook a consultation exercise with young people across the United Kingdom to hear their views. In our consultation, we found that young people expect more from education. There is a greater need for the mandatory provision of citizenship education. Young people want to understand democratic systems locally, nationally and internationally. They emphasize the need to be fully prepared for life and therefore support the provision of skills classes in areas such as budgeting, home economics and independent life. Bearing in mind the high levels of teenage pregnancy in the United Kingdom, they also want all education authorities and youth providers to offer sexual health education.

Young people are not just the future — we are the present. We have a right to be involved in all decisions. Youth participation is essential. We appreciate the existence of youth parliaments in our country and respectfully request the development of more youth-led organizations worldwide.

I ask for recognition, involvement and understanding of youth. I ask for implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Ten years have passed; it is now time for action.

Mr. Banze (Mozambique): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and my own country, Mozambique.

The States members of SADC believe that, 10 years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, this meeting should be not just an opportunity for review and appraisal, but also a platform for rededication and commitment to the 10 priority areas affecting young people identified by the General Assembly in the World Programme. This meeting must therefore devise clear, effective and concrete strategies to nudge the process of implementation forward in order to ensure its real meaning to youth across the globe.

SADC member States, individually and collectively, have made significant progress in the area of youth development and empowerment, although

there are still challenges and constraints to contend with. Most of the 14 member States have adopted national youth policies.

The States members of SADC endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation, contained in document A/60/61, that youth concerns be mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategies and initiatives, as we believe that youth, particularly those living in rural areas, which constitute the majority of that segment of society in our countries, should be consulted whenever we address strategies affecting their well-being.

We are gratified by reports concerning an overall increase in the number of young people completing both primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, we are also genuinely concerned at the fact that 113 million children are currently out of school. We therefore believe that we should all heed the call of the Secretary-General to strengthen our efforts to ensure universal access to education for all young people, particularly girls. We also agree with the Secretary-General that we should not focus only on providing universal education, but that more emphasis should be placed on quality education. More often than not, the efforts of our Governments to provide good quality education, including the use of information and communication technologies, are hampered by a lack of resources. We call upon our development partners to continue to assist us in that regard.

Youth unemployment remains one of our greatest challenges. In our national development strategies, we are striving to create opportunities for full, productive and decent employment for youth by enacting youth employment strategies, entrepreneurial training, microcredit schemes, vocational training and career guidance, good leadership training, labour intensive programmes, and skill training in information and communication technologies as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Developments Goals. While we are grateful to those donors and agencies that are assisting our countries in that regard, we encourage other relevant stakeholders to assist and support our efforts to realizing that goal, which would otherwise remain an elusive dream.

Youth participation in the construction of a better future strengthens Governments in their efforts to find appropriate solutions to the most pressing problems that our youths are facing. In that regard, we support the increased participation of youth in issues that affect them.

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youth, as well as conflicts, have a negative impact on their development and consequently on the achievement of their full potential. We all agree that any strategy to combat HIV/AIDS should involve first and foremost prevention, treatment, care and support. Young people, who are the future of the world, must be provided with information and education on life skills that will empower them to make better choices and decisions about their health.

The SADC member States continue to place special emphasis on the girl child, as we strongly believe that the girl child is the woman of tomorrow, whom we should, as a matter of duty, free from inheriting a life of prejudice, fear and want. However, despite the standing commitments we have undertaken in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the girl child of today still faces a plethora of problems and hardships. In our attempt to highlight the plight of the girl child, SADC member States have submitted a draft resolution on the issue, which is considered every two years by the General Assembly. We call on all Member States to continue to support the draft resolution to be introduced during the current session of the General Assembly, the sole aim of which is to give real meaning to the lives of girls across the globe.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the need for the adoption at this session of the five priority areas identified since the adoption of the World Programme of Action. We in SADC pledge to recommit ourselves to the full and accelerated implementation of the World Programme. We stand ready to cooperate with other Member States in all efforts geared towards translating all 15 priority areas into reality.

The President: I would like to remind members that we have only two meetings devoted to this item, and that 43 speakers remain on the list. I would therefore propose that the list of speakers be closed as of now.

It was so decided.

Ms. Loguzzo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is speaking on behalf of the Rio Group.

The Rio Group countries deem the situation of our youth to be a priority and a challenge. In that sense, we are grateful for the organization of these meetings, which will allow us to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, to which we committed ourselves 10 years ago.

Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme, we acknowledge that all the issues cited therein remain relevant, although inadequate for young people constantly exposed to new challenges, such as globalization, access to new technologies, the spread of HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, and the expansion of armed conflicts. We hope that the Commission on Social Development at its next session will consider the inclusion of those five main areas, as well as other emerging issues, in order to draft a supplement to the Programme of Action.

Global realities show that the young suffer from hunger and poverty, especially in rural zones, where education and employment opportunities are limited. On the other hand, they are vulnerable to such problems as drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism and delinquency. In that context, it is indispensable to have educational and prevention programmes for youth that will encourage their comprehensive development, so that they can make a positive contribution to society.

The Rio Group clearly understands the need to renew our commitment to our youth in order to eradicate poverty and unemployment. To do that, it is indispensable to recognize the specific needs of youth and to incorporate young people in the development of national, regional and international strategies against poverty and unemployment. Strategies to achieve productive employment for youth should try to make employment opportunities compatible with their being in school, as that will afford them better work opportunities in future.

For young people from low-income homes it is common to drop out of school at an early age. That group begins looking for jobs requiring few qualifications, and that in turn increases the possibility of their being poor in their adult life. Therefore, it is a double challenge: on the one hand, the need to keep adolescents in the educational system, and on the other, to create jobs for youth that are consonant with their skills. High unemployment rates even for the more qualified young people demonstrate the great difficulties facing their integration into the workforce and, as a result, the depression and lack of well-being among youth.

The Rio Group countries are pooling our efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, because we believe those Goals also address young people. In that respect, we would like to highlight some regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group on HIV/AIDS and the spread of successful experiments such as "Bolsa Familia", which is a subsidy programme that requires periodic visits to health services and that children stay in school. We also encourage full gender equality, which will eliminate stereotypes of the image of women in order to allow egalitarian access to education and employment for women.

We are concerned by the incidence of HIV/AIDS among youth. We believe that to reverse the spread of that disease we must work both on promotion of safe sexual behaviour and on prevention through social communication campaigns. As part of a general health strategy, it is important to incorporate sex education, including information on sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and drug use, in both in teachers' training programmes and in educational programmes for adolescents.

We are convinced that in order to adequately evaluate the current situation of youth, we must include young people themselves. In that connection, for the first time in our region, the sixteenth World Festival of Youth and Students was held in Caracas in August 2005 — a demonstration of the permanent and tireless struggle for youth and their rights. At that event, young people themselves reiterated the importance of coordinating the various segments of society in demanding peace and security, access to universal and free education and health care, employment for all, elimination of discrimination of all kinds and a new international order that would eliminate growing poverty and foreign debt.

Some of our countries have instituted a national policy for youth so that the young people may participate in shaping the societies in which they live while seeking to improve themselves and realize their full potential.

As I indicated in the beginning of my statement, the Rio Group countries attach very high priority to our

youth. We would have liked to have more Latin American young people participating at this event, as well as at other relevant United Nations events. But as always, we are faced with budget restrictions. We hope that as a result of the resolution we will adopt today, the participation of more young people from developing countries will be possible at such meetings, using, inter alia, resources from the United Nations Youth Fund.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Azalina Othman Said, Minister for Youth and Sports of Malaysia.

Ms. Othman Said (Malaysia): On behalf of the people and Government of Malaysia, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on his timely decision to convene this congregation of distinguished personalities to deliberate upon youth perspectives, policies and interventions across the globe.

The tenth anniversary celebrations of the World Programme of Action on Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, introduced in 1995, is yet another attestation of the strategic implementation of youth development programmes by the United Nations.

For Malaysia, our National Youth Consultative Council, established in 1972, is the highest body that acts as a youth parliament. It provides a forum for both governmental and non-governmental organizations to meet, discuss and debate common issues related to youth development programmes. In 1985, in conjunction with the United Nations International Youth Year, Malaysia formulated a national youth policy. That policy was further reviewed in 1997 and became known as the National Youth Development Policy, providing guidelines for developing and implementing programmes. In 2004, the Ministry embarked on an 11-point Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan, which in many ways parallels the World Programme of Action. That blueprint provides the national framework to spearhead youth development through 2020, the year in which Malaysia aspires to achieve developed-nation status.

One of the outcomes of the Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan is the creation of the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development. Among the Institute's main objectives are to conduct research and provide better understanding of the needs and issues relevant to young people for the different segments of society. To ensure that our youth planning is on the right track to achieve our objectives, we are preparing to embark on an empirical study to determine a Malaysian youth behavioural and well-being index. It is hoped that those indices will provide the Government with more accurate and measurable norms to chart the progress of young people.

At the same time, another instrument, the Malaysian Youth Act, is being enacted to give direction for proper and systematic youth development. The Act will also encompass appropriate intervention from other ministries and relevant agencies to improve coordination and implementation of policies and guidelines pertaining to youth development. The Youth Act will ultimately serve to protect and defend the rights and interests of the younger generation as it promotes and incorporates an effective delivery system.

Malaysia recognizes youth as the agents of change. They are supposed to be receptive to new ideas and the adoption of new technologies and are willing to make changes. To harness the potential of the younger generation, the national Youth Development Plan revolves around a three-pronged strategy: leadership training, acquisition of vocational and technical skills, and an entrepreneurship programme.

Malaysia, like other nations, has not been spared the social maladies that accompany development and modernization. With progress come the looming threats of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, premarital sex and teenage pregnancy, to mention a few. To counter such negative influences the Malaysian Government has designed several intervention programmes.

Rakan Muda — Young Friends — is an outreach programme that addresses social ills by offering avenues for young people between the age of 15 to 25 to fill their time productively through nine lifestyle programme packages. Introduced in 1994, it is now being revitalized to meet present and future challenges in the midst of globalization and an ever-changing youth culture.

Another intervention programme addressing drug abuse and HIV is the Belia Benci Dadah — Youth Against Drugs — campaign. That campaign empowers youth to make their own decisions on the options and choices in life. Built on a youth-for-youth concept, it also mobilizes university and college students to play a

part in disseminating information on the harmful effects of drug abuse.

In that regard, and with a view to increasing youth participation and involvement in its work, Malaysia wishes to propose that the United Nations consider the following.

First, a youth development index could be formulated to provide a standard indicator that would help monitor and evaluate progress made by the World Programme of Action. Second, we could establish a world economic youth fund to provide financial assistance to entrepreneurship programmes for young people. Third, we could conduct regional consultations with Member States and youth organizations through the Regional Commissions of the United Nations to assist and evaluate the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Fourth, we could continue the World Youth Forum. Fifth, the Youth Unit could be strengthened and possibly expanding, to give due attention to the growing importance of issues related to youth and their participation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Sixth, we should continue the informal interactive round-table discussions and organize other events to provide more opportunities and encourage greater youth participation in areas of specific interest and immediate concern to youth in the United Nations. Seventh, we should provide assistance to Member States, upon request, for the participation of youth representatives on a continuing basis during relevant discussions in the General Assembly, as well as in the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions.

The time has come for us to grow younger. The age of youth is here. The United Nations needs to be the path finder for all of the world's youth. It needs to chart a clear course, because, very soon, it will be the young people who will be showing us the way.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency, Ms. Lena Hallengren, Minister for Pre-School Education, Youth Affairs and Adult Learning of Sweden.

Ms. Hallengren (Sweden): I am happy to see so many youth delegates here today.

I would like to align myself with the statement made earlier by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union (EU).

It is an honour for me to be here today, together with the Swedish youth representative, Hanna Hallin.

I am often asked why a specific youth policy is needed. I always answer, "Because youth are facing similar challenges". It is about a good education. It is about establishing oneself on the labour market and getting one's first own place to live. That must be a possibility for all young people, women and men, regardless of whether they are rich or poor or live in the North or the South, and regardless of what background they are from.

The Swedish Government, as well as the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations, strongly support the reaffirmation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also attach critical importance to the five additional areas identified in the 2003 World Youth Report (*A/58/79*). Swedish national youth policy has been greatly inspired by, and is very much in line with, the Programme, with regard to both the cross-sectoral way of considering youth issues and to the prioritized areas.

Major improvements have been made in the situation of young women and young men in many areas, but we are still facing great challenges. Over 200 million young people still live in poverty. Some 130 million are illiterate. Almost 25 per cent of those who live with HIV globally are under the age of 25. Youth unemployment worldwide has increased during the past decade.

We know that in periods of economic recession, youth are among the worst hit. We also know from studies that being unemployed when young affects one's future opportunities in the labour market. Promoting youth employment is therefore one of the top priorities for the Swedish Government. Recently, in response to an initiative by France, Germany, Spain and Sweden, the EU has also made a stronger commitment to the promotion of youth employment through the European Youth Pact.

As was discussed at the round table yesterday, we must make commitments matter, and take concrete action. Work has to be done at the local, regional, national and international levels and in partnership with civil society and other concerned actors. Youth and their organizations should play a leading role in that work.

The implementation of cross-sectoral integrated national youth policies is vital. So is a renewed and continuous commitment to implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreements.

We often talk about young people as the future. But let us never forget that they are an important part of society today. It is not for them, but together with them, that we should work to realize the objectives of the World Programme of Action.

With your permission, Mr. President, I will now yield to floor to the Swedish youth representative, Ms. Hanna Hallin.

Ms. Hallin (Sweden): Imagine a world in which millions of young people do not die before the age of 20 because of poverty, pregnancy, conflict, the lack of health services or HIV/AIDS; a world in which young women and young men are able to read and have decent work with a decent salary; a world in which young people are free to seek their identity, without fear of repression, exclusion or discrimination. Imagine a world in which the voices of youth count.

As the Swedish youth delegate, I am honoured to address the Assembly today. There are more youth delegates present here than ever before. This is a welcome tenth anniversary birthday gift from those Governments to the youth of their nations and of the world. Governments must continue to include youth representatives in their national delegations, and allow us to participate and be listened to. This is about making commitments matter and, first and foremost, about the long-term development of each society and the world at large.

Young women and young men are today a major force in global development. Young people, when given the opportunity, are initiating a vast number of projects to improve life in their communities. Such projects include combating HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, promoting a clean environment and initiating peer-to-peer education.

Youth-led initiatives must be facilitated and, when effective, turned into partnerships with Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. The establishment of independent youth organizations must be an essential and uncomplicated process, and youth organizations must have access to public and private funding.

Young people should be seen as equal partners in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I stress here the significance of viewing the World Programme of Action for Youth as the key to accomplishing the eight development goals. In this work we ask for the recognition and involvement of youth, for tolerance and understanding, and for implementation.

At the same time, young people are marginalized when Governments do not respect the right to health, education and decent work. We are also marginalized when we are not allowed to express our sexual, religious or indigenous identity without fear for our lives. For instance, today young people flee their countries because of their sexual identity. It should be every person's right to seek his or her identity; that is a question of human dignity.

Hence, every national youth policy should include measurable goals on how to improve the situation for all young women and young men, with special attention to marginalized youth, in order to secure our full participation in society.

There are no adequate excuses. Young people's needs must be taken into account, and young people must be able to lead the development of their societies. We want a world in which young people do not die before the age of 20; where young people are able to read and have decent work with a decent salary. We want a world where young people are free to seek their identity and where the voices of youth count.

It is time for action. We all know what to do; now let us do it. The world that we are aiming for is well within our reach. We have the goals, the means and the motivation to reach it. Let us prove that our common efforts in the World Programme of Action for Youth were not in vain. Let young people be the change.

The President: The division of labour between the representatives of Sweden symbolizes the need for Governments to work closely with youth representatives. However, the sharing of statements is not the normal practice in the General Assembly; we will make today's meeting exceptional in that respect. I am eager to make the point that that is not precedent-setting for future General Assembly meetings.

However, it is a great symbol of how we have to work together.

Ms. Yao (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We are celebrating today the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Although this Hall has never before welcomed so many representatives of youth, there are still not enough young people here. Too many of them must settle for watching from the sidelines as decisions are taken that will affect our common future.

The needs of youth have never before been defined so specifically, yet actions continue to fall short of expectations. We hope that an increasing number of States will focus on the need to act. That is why we ask all States to recognize young people and to include them in their decision-making processes. We ask for tolerance, and we ask that the World Programme of Action for Youth be implemented.

One of the issues addressed in the Programme of Action is health. Youth is vulnerable. Many young people live in insecurity and fear the future. According to the 2001 *World Health Report*, almost one out of four young people has behavioural problems. Causes of mental illness vary from one country to another and from one person to another. But one thing is universal: the need to have a useful occupation in the context of a solid social network. Social integration, access to education and training, as well as job security, are what enable young people to find their place in society. We need a healthy youth in order to build a healthy society.

Alone we cannot build such a social network, or find lasting solutions, but together we can do this. Together we can integrate young people into our societies and support their development. Together we can open up the labour market to them and give them prospects for the future. Together we can strengthen their communities and pave the way for them towards a promising future.

We would like to draw the attention of public opinion to the mental health of young people and to note that targeted measures must be taken in the areas of labour policies and the social integration of youth. We would like to see national prevention programmes as well as local and regional plans of action to reduce the incidence of mental problems among young people.

Finally, we would ask that youth be involved in processes established to resolve that problem. We want to participate. Young people are here today, and they are ready to shoulder their responsibilities in the building of our common future. We want to participate in the process of dialogue and in the actions taken, and we want to act together to implement ideas that have been jointly developed.

We want to be partners. To do so, we need your experience and your trust. We need your support. The United Nations will be strengthened by common action on our wishes. Thus we should work together so that our wishes today can become reality tomorrow. It is time to act. We all know what we have to do. Therefore, without waiting any longer, let us do it.

Mr. Solano (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, and the members of your Bureau on your election, and to reiterate what was stated by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Rio Group. Costa Rica would like to comment on some points that are of particular interest to us.

Ten years ago we adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Today we are meeting here to commemorate that decision and to review our actions, celebrate our progress and share our concerns. Young people are not only the future; they are also strategic stakeholders today as well as first-class citizens. We therefore reiterate our belief in the need to take concrete action to ensure their genuine participation in decision-making; promote their full employment in conditions of dignity; eradicate hunger and poverty; guarantee their access to adequate and comprehensive health care; combat the scourges that threaten them, such as crime, conflicts and HIV/AIDS; and promote solidarity among generations.

Costa Rica is in favour of active participation by young people at the national and international levels. Nationally, we have committed ourselves to a governmental approach that ensures their participation. On the understanding that it is the Government's responsibility to promote forward-looking actions at the State level and to undertake medium- and long-term projects, based on participation and social dialogue, that transcend political and electoral cycles. We should not shy away from taking common decisions, working together and committing ourselves to building jointly a culture of participation in public policy.

With the support of the United Nations Population Fund and of the "State of the nation" programme, we have elaborated a plan of action on public policy for young people that proposes concrete action in four main areas: education, health, employment and participation.

In keeping with a law passed in 2002, Costa Rica agreed to establish a National Assembly of Youth charged with obtaining information on, discussing, changing and adopting public policies concerning young people, thus making it the institution most important to the youth of Costa Rica. This is an unprecedented step in the strategy aimed at promoting decision-making by young citizens; we are particularly proud of it.

In the international area, we agree that it would be a good practice if, at major United Nations events at which the subject of youth is discussed, young people formed part of official delegations. Let us recall here, however, that a lack of resources hampers this, and, in many cases, prevents it entirely. We therefore welcome the call made in the draft resolution which, thanks to the leadership of the delegation of Portugal, we will adopt later today, on Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure the official participation of young people in their delegations, particularly from developing countries, including through the use of the United Nations Youth Fund.

The number of young people worldwide stands today at 1.553 billion, 85 per cent of whom live in developing countries. These numbers make it clear that the challenge of promoting a climate conducive to maximizing the potential of young people, and of all persons, is greatest in those countries that have the least financial, economic and technological resources to do so.

It is unacceptable that, in a world with a food surplus, more than 900 million people suffer from hunger. It is equally unacceptable that we are wasting the potential contributions of at least 88 million unemployed young people. Many more are under-employed in the unstructured economy.

The reports that have been submitted for our consideration are evidence of the fact that, while we have made progress in certain areas, we are far from having obtained encouraging results. Our policies, as indicated in the report on the world social situation, must be restructured, as they are creating or promoting trends that are morally and politically unacceptable.

Solidarity lies in the belief that we are all in the same boat and should be reflected, inter alia, in the fulfilment of our commitments to international cooperation. We reiterate our recognition of those countries that have already fulfilled their commitments or are about to do so, and we renew our appeal to everyone to shoulder their responsibility together today to guarantee a viable tomorrow.

We share the concern expressed in the "World Youth Report 2005" about the advance of HIV/AIDS and its particular impact, especially among our young women. The current generation of youth has not known a world without AIDS. We are convinced that, in order to eradicate that scourge, young people must participate in defining and implementing national and international strategies in that area.

Our country has encouraged a youth project known as "Hands to work", which advocates a comprehensive approach to health care and incorporates human rights, youth, gender, community participation and social inclusion issues. We feel that it will help us to obtain positive results and will therefore make it available to the members of the international community.

I wish to share our concern over the fact that young people are among the most active sectors of the population in terms of criminality. The fact that most prison inmates are men should serve as a wake-up call and prompt us to consider the issue in depth and take corrective measures. Our twenty-first century should focus on the socialization of our young people. Costa Rica calls on the United Nations system, and in particular on those agencies responsible for youth, to incorporate that element into the preparation of relevant reports and studies and to propose measures that States might use in confronting that situation.

Ten years ago, we identified 10 priority areas in the Programme of Action being considered today. Those issues remain as relevant as ever to the youth of today and of the future. We understand, however, that the world is changing, and changing quickly. We therefore support, without prejudice to the identification of new measures that may be considered in the future, the inclusion of the five new concerns proposed by the Secretary-General in his "World Youth

Report 2005", supplementing the priorities of the World Programme of Action.

Some have said that youth is a disease that is cured by time. We disagree with that diagnosis. Far from being a disease, youth is a cure. Youth is dreams; it is ideals, hopes, proposals, solutions and the present. It is a motor of change and an actor in development. In that faith, I have the honour to reiterate Costa Rica's full support for the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, which we will sign in the next few days in the beautiful city of Badajoz, Spain.

Mr. Ahmed (Pakistan): I feel highly privileged to represent the youth of Pakistan at this forum today. I represent the part of a global community that is imbued with an ideal vision driven by lofty goals and fired by a desire to achieve the most with scarce resources.

A number of the world's leading scientists, engineers, doctors, bankers and sportsmen come from Pakistan. While we take great pride in their accomplishments, we confess with a heavy heart that there have been many other dynamic souls who have not been able to realize their potential due to insufficient opportunities and inadequate resources.

There are about 35 million youth in my country; young women represent 48 per cent of that number. As is rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, poverty and associated problems remain a major impediment to the progress of youth worldwide. Our nation economy has shown a strong recovery in the last five years, and we achieved a growth rate of 8.4 per cent last year — the highest in Asia. Despite that, the budgetary constraints on youth and social welfare areas are a serious issue. The Government is striving hard to tackle the resource shortage, but it is a Herculean task in the face of the twin menaces of unemployment and poverty.

Undaunted, we are steadfast in our struggle to rise high. We prefer to take the lead and do what we can to improve our conditions. One example is the increasing number of young, successful information technology entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Taking advantage of the improved investment climate in the country, young people are initiating small-scale business ventures in numbers never seen in the history of our region.

We have a highly educated and modern human resource base. To catapult the efforts of youth, the Government has established a small and medium-sized enterprise development authority, which provides loans of up to $25,000.

Around 65 per cent of young people live in the rural regions. To help that crucial cohort, the Khushali Bank has been established with capital of $28 million for extending soft loans to the unemployed in rural regions. Young women constitute 35 per cent of the Bank's clientele.

In a special project launched earlier this year, 29 of the poorest districts were selected, where 500,000 girl students in 5,000 schools are receiving cooked meals. Through another programme, girls living in rural areas are being given free uniforms and textbooks, with a monthly stipend, until they reach the sixth grade.

Islam elevated the status of women and mandated their rights, which include equal access to education, among other things. While we have come a long way, more needs to be done to ensure the greater involvement and retention of girls in schools, as well as their increased participation in public life.

As we persevere to achieve our development goals, being global citizens we look towards the international community. Only together can we succeed and build on what we have achieved in the World Programme of Action for Youth. We must do what we can at the United Nations and in our respective countries to influence policies and actions for youth so that they will be truly beneficial to us.

Mr. Jiang Guangping (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, please allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting today. The Chinese Government and Chinese youth highly appreciate the General Assembly's convening two plenary meetings on youth issues against the backdrop of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

Ten years ago, the United Nations adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We meet here today to evaluate globally the implementation of the Programme and to reiterate our commitment to youth. The document is the most programmatic statement formulated by the United Nations since its establishment. It is a milestone in the process of world youth development and a symbol of the gradual internationalization of youth issues. We are now seeking to re-evaluate its

implementation, reiterate the international community's commitment, and reconfirm our determination. This meeting will have an important impact on youth development worldwide and international cooperation.

The past decade has been significant for China's reform, opening-up and modernization process. It has also been an important decade for the development process of Chinese youth. Over the past 10 years, the Chinese Government and leaders have paid tireless attention to youth issues. With respect to the 10 priorities identified in the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Government has established various cross-cutting organs on youth issues, including a State Council working committee on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and a leading group on the work of juvenile delinquency prevention. The Chinese legislative organs have amended the law on the protection of minors and promulgated a law on the prevention of juvenile delinquency to provide legal and institutional guarantees for youth development and the protection of young people's rights and interests. Furthermore, the sustained and rapid development of the Chinese economy and the Chinese Government's heavy investment in the areas of education, employment, health, culture and sports have provided Chinese youth development with better conditions than ever before, enormously raising the overall calibre of Chinese youth and enabling unprecedented youth participation.

With the support and encouragement of the Chinese Government, youth organizations at all levels, with the Communist Youth League of China and All-China Youth Federation at the core, have drawn together a vast group of young people and provided strong organizational support for their healthy development.

However, various problems, including intergenerational and other issues, have affected the development of young people. While those problems are specifically Chinese in nature, they also have global dimensions and universal features. In comparison to young people of previous generations, today's youth enjoy more diverse opportunities and face more complicated challenges. We would stress our work in the following three fields.

First, the Governments of the world should invest in youth with a long-term perspective and support the development of youth organizations and networks. Secondly, they should consider the influence of economic globalization on young people and its negative impact on marginalized youth so as to create opportunities for them to benefit from globalization. Thirdly, international cooperation should be stepped up. We are delighted that international cooperation in the field of youth development has been steadily increasing. China hopes that all Member States will jointly promote dialogue and cooperation on youth issues between developed countries and developing countries and the common development of world youth.

Young people represent not only the world of tomorrow, but also that of today. Let us join hands, cooperate together, and strive to build a harmonious world of lasting peace, common prosperity and an enabling environment for the growth and development of young people everywhere.

Ms. Khalil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Ten years after its adoption, we meet today to evaluate the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which identifies 10 vital priority areas to promote the welfare of youth. In our opinion, perhaps the most important of those areas is employment. Given the time constraints, I will focus on that one issue, the foundation of a cohesive social and economic structure based on improved prospects for a better way of life, including education, health care and consistently rising standards in those areas. It is also the foundation of economic progress and development and the best way to avert the involvement of youth in illegal activities, including extremism and terrorism.

If we are to speak objectively, we must start by stating that the creation of new opportunities for regular employment has become a challenge not only to national Governments, but also to the international community as a whole. It falls under the collective responsibility to ensure sustainable economic and social development and is key to solving such transnational problems as terrorism, discrimination against migrants, and associated cultural and social issues.

Mitigating the negative effects of globalization, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, can undoubtedly greatly enhance the potential for success in addressing youth problems. The ongoing exchanges among the nations of the world can be oriented towards

universal good governance and democracy, to the benefit of all. It is certain that the international market economy has huge productive potential; if wisely managed, it can promote unprecedented material progress and more productive employment and reduce poverty worldwide.

On the other hand, we are far from achieving all those ambitions. Globalization exacerbates the unequal distribution of resources throughout the world, and many countries and peoples do not share in its benefits. Worse yet, many of those countries and peoples lack the ability to make their voices heard in decision-making on international development. For the large majority of people, therefore, globalization has failed to fulfil their most basic hopes for better jobs.

The Egyptian Government pays close attention to the issue of unemployment in its efforts to achieve comprehensive social and economic development. It seeks adequate solutions to reducing unemployment, including the establishment of far-reaching programmes to provide employment opportunities, such as the Tushki project, the East Tofri'a project and the North-West Suez Bay project. It also encourages national and international investment.

Two pioneering projects for youth have also been set up in Egypt under a long-term strategy. The first is a national programme for productive families and professional development; launched in the 1960s, it seeks to transform low-income and the poorest families into productive entities working to meet the needs of traditional society, relying on interaction with the Government, civil society and a variety of public organizations so as to meet the national goal of realizing the aspirations of youth. The second is the social development fund established in 1991 as a model for distributing soft loans to address the negative effects of economic reform and the transition to free-market liberalization and privatization, which Egypt has begun in order to keep pace with globalization by creating new work opportunities and eliminating poverty, with special attention to such vulnerable groups as women and the disabled.

We must find new ways of making progress on youth issues, including more youth-oriented policies and special programmes on development. That can be done by using new and creative methods to implement what was agreed to in the World Programmes of Action for Youth.

Ms. Nuñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow us to greet you, Sir, at this important plenary meeting of the General Assembly, at which we are considering, first and foremost, the future of mankind.

The World Programme of Action for Youth represented without doubt an important step in the promotion of the well-being of the younger generations. Much remains to be done. It is not our intention to emphasize statistics. Every analysis of the fulfilment of the development goals, as part of the follow-up to the outcome of important United Nations conferences and summits, clearly indicates delays in the implementation of the priority areas adopted 10 years ago, which are in need of a thorough relaunching within the framework of the implementation of the Programme.

In our country, programmes targeting Cuban youth generate a wide variety of alternatives for the social development of young people, guarantee their genuine inclusion as individuals in the process of transforming society, and create conditions to improve their quality of life. Young people, more than mere objects of social policy, play a leading role in its formulation and implementation and have a solid background in the essence of the political culture of participation and the democratic traditions of Cuban society.

Such purposes are achieved through a comprehensive approach to youth problems, to which various Government institutions are involved in finding solutions. Valuable information is received from social and demographic studies and priority is given to the commendable work of social organizations, especially youth organizations.

The results achieved by our country speak for themselves. Currently, for instance, the literacy rate of Cuban youth stands at 99.96 per cent, access to all levels of education is free and universal, and full employment has been reached following strenuous efforts to qualify and integrate young people who have had no access to education and jobs.

The time is long past when corrupt leaders plundered public funds and Government coffers and thousands of young people were unable to educate themselves and fell victim to rampant unemployment. However, some people want us to go back in time. Seven out of every 10 Cubans were born and have

lived in the hardship caused by the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States more than four decades ago. Nothing relating to the well-being of our youth escapes the consequences of the blockade.

Future generations need a world free of hunger and poverty, with health care, education and dignity for all — a world without oppression and discrimination, without war, genocidal blockades or the exploitation of the weakest. Such was the demand of thousands of people from throughout the world who met in Caracas, Venezuela, to celebrate the Sixteenth World Festival of Youth and Students. The letter and spirit of the Programme of Action for Youth will make sense only when the current insulting international order is eliminated.

Mr. Whitehouse (Australia): As Australia's youth representative, I am honoured by the opportunity to address the General Assembly today. But just to be a little bit different, I am not going to talk about the World Programme of Action for Youth. I am going to talk about Australian young people.

I have travelled the length and breadth of my country, chatting with young people and asking them what is important to young Australians. It is my humble privilege to bring the Assembly their voices.

I would like to share the voices of two groups of Australian young people. The first is in an Australian Aboriginal community called Warmun, nearly 1,000 kilometres from the closest large city. Here, a group of young boys are surrounded by dilapidated houses, dirt streets crammed with rubbish, and peers who have never seen the inside of a school. The second, in a very different setting, is a group of 400 young people crammed into the town hall of a large capital city, where they are surrounded by tall, multi-million dollar buildings and the latest technology. Yet, despite the disparate nature of those two groups, both overwhelmingly assert that the two biggest issues facing the world today are the crisis in Iraq and continuing poverty in our world. That, in the case of the young Aboriginal boys, is true despite their own extreme challenges.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australia is a proudly multicultural country. While our indigenous peoples have called Australia home for more than 60,000 years, the evolving kaleidoscope of Australian life has seen many new faces become part of Australia in the last few years. The essence of Australian multiculturalism is that we do not all look the same and we do not all sound the same, but we are all Australian. It is our unity in our diversity that ties our dreams together.

While Australia's young people are diverse in colour, creed and geography, our voices reflect the unity that binds our country. In particular, we overwhelmingly communicate three basic needs: the need for a sense of community, the need for a sense of safety, and the need for a purpose.

Australia is overwhelmingly a country of community. Beyond the overarching community of being Australian, we have many smaller communities — rural towns, suburbs, schools, and even football clubs. I have found that, for Australian young people, the drive to be part of a community, whatever form that takes, supersedes all else. The need to find a place to belong is the most powerful force in shaping who we are.

Yet as I found, that drive for community often conflicts with the other great desires of Australian young people: the desires for safety and purpose. In various areas of Australia, young people told me of the unrelenting violence that exists in their homes. In rural Australia, young people told me of the lack of opportunities present in their communities. Youth unemployment is soaring, educational opportunities pale in comparison to those offered in metropolitan areas, and recreational facilities are often considerably underdeveloped.

However, in response to my queries as to why they would choose to stay in their community, all I received were baffled looks. This is their home, they told me; this is where their family and friends are; this is where they belong — this is their community. They could try to seek opportunities elsewhere, but would find the transition too difficult and return to their place of belonging. The draw of their communities was far too powerful.

If it is community that is so powerful for young people, the foremost role of our society must be to enable those young people, first, to remain in their communities, but more importantly, to be able to reach their full potential within a safe and purposeful existence.

One vital way to create communities that support and nurture young people is to include young people in the decision-making process. The Australian Government supports many programmes, such as youth advisory councils and the National Youth Roundtable, which offer young people a meaningful opportunity to dialogue with and advise those who make decisions on their behalf. Young Australians want not only to be kept informed of what decisions are being made on their behalf, but also to be involved in those decisions that affect their lives.

It is clear to me that, when given half a chance, young people have the most tremendous capacity to shape their own existence. Here are just three examples that I encountered. A few months ago, two teenagers organized a youth conference in rural Australia to enable other young Australians who live in the outback to meet and share opportunities. A young Australian in a seemingly depressed town in Northern Australia has recently created his community's first youth group in an attempt to offer his peers alternatives to unemployment and drugs. A group of Australian Aboriginal young women in the north of Western Australia have created a dancing group in an extremely isolated community, thus providing teenage girls with an opportunity to participate meaningfully in their community. Just by being themselves, they are being extraordinary.

As Australia's youth representative to the United Nations, I met countless young people who were captivated by the opportunity to have their voices heard at the United Nations. To be heard in the highest forum in the world is an opportunity without peer, especially for young people who may have never thought that their voices were valuable or worthy.

Youth representatives have the unique potential to bring voices from the ground to the highest decision-making body in the world. It is unique. It has the potential to change the United Nations from an abstract notion in young people's minds into a genuine entity in the souls of countless young people throughout the world. There is nothing more vital to the prosperity of the United Nations than a new generation of people believing that the United Nations is listening to them and acting on their behalf. I urge countries to consider including a youth representative in their delegations to the United Nations.

I thank members for this opportunity today. There are countless young Australians who feel valued merely because representatives listened to me here.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The Tunisian delegation sets great store by the agenda item before us today, and takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the quality of the reports produced on the issues under consideration. We also thank the Secretariat staff for their eloquent presentation of those contributions to our debate, and in particular for the "World Youth Report 2005", whose main conclusions and recommendations Tunisia embraces.

The 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond coincides with the Assembly's recent consideration of the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. We believe in the links between the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a new set of internationally agreed objectives to help youth and to integrate their needs into the broader framework of development programmes.

Most Member States have undeniably made some progress in certain priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Nevertheless, we endorse the Secretary-General's conclusion that "the current generation of young people is facing ever more complex challenges than the previous generation" (*A/60/61*, para. 93) and that it has become increasingly urgent to honour the commitment to find decent and productive employment for young people everywhere. The unemployment and underemployment of youth are no longer seen as merely social problems; they also have economic dimensions and, increasingly, political and security aspects as well. The creation of jobs helps to reduce the tensions that currently underpin numerous security and other social problems, including poverty, marginalization and extremism.

Moreover, several major transformations and events have taken place in the world since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and have had a direct impact on young people, who constitute 18 per cent of the world population today. People under 24 now make up almost half the world's population. The emergence of globalization, the increased use of information and communications technologies, access to such technologies, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the growing

involvement of youth in armed conflict, the resurgence of terrorism, and the vast numbers of young people living below the poverty line and suffering from malnutrition are just some of the changes in question. They clearly call for new responses to the needs of young people in education, the development of professional training, health care and employment, in an environment of increasing economic globalization and greater access to new information and communications technologies.

Special attention must be paid to the principle of a people-based approach and its embodiment in public and strategic development policies. Such an approach would contribute to attaining the international community's goals, the Millennium Development Goals in particular, and would require better mitigation of the social effects of globalization, the targeting of national and international macroeconomic policies towards social objectives, and support for the capacities of Governments to carry out their own social policies.

Tunisia is convinced that youth employment policies should not be confined to intervention in the labour market, but include social, educational and fiscal dimensions as well. Thus, young people enjoy the great concern of the Tunisian State, and measures have been taken to help them in the fields of education, culture, training, health care, leisure and so on. The State is striving to provide them with conditions for healthy development and a balanced education, ensure their integration into society, and promote their intellectual, scientific and artistic development. Significant investments have been earmarked for modernization and for ongoing and systematic re-evaluation of professional teaching programmes based not only on traditional trades, but also on the acquisition of new competences essential to better integration into the labour market.

With respect to employment, I note in particular the Tunisian national employment fund designed to integrate young people with scarce employment opportunities. We have also established a programme to create sources of revenue to help underprivileged families undertake family economic projects to improve their living conditions.

Despite all such efforts, we, like many developing countries, know that much remains to be done in order to honour all the national commitments that have been made to our youth. We are also determined to continue to work at the international level with a view to stepping up our mobilization to meet their needs and legitimate aspirations.

Mr. Wedershoven (Netherlands): It is with great honour and gratitude, but also with equally great concern, that I address the Assembly today.

(*spoke in French*)

> "Representatives and leaders of Europe, we appeal to your sense of solidarity and kindness to come to our rescue in Africa. Help us; we are suffering terribly."

(*spoke in English*)

That plea is from a letter written six years ago by two boys from Guinea, Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara. It was found with their dead bodies in the landing gear of a plane en route to Europe on 2 August 1999. The boys had embarked on a dangerous journey in an attempt to flee from danger in the hope of a brighter future. Risking their lives seemed a better option to them than staying home. I find their courage and despair as moving today as I did when I myself was a young boy growing up in the safety of the Netherlands.

The world today offers hardly more opportunities to young people than it did to Yaguine and Fodé. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees informs us that more than 20 million young people are fleeing from the same danger: the lack of prospects. Their despair becomes easier to understand when we realize that almost 90 million young people are unemployed and make up more than half the world's unemployed. Imagine the obstacles 500 million young people entering the workforce over the next 10 years — young people with little opportunity to earn a living — will face. Those sobering statistics, together with Yaguine and Fodé's cry for help, compel me to draw the Assembly's attention to the problem of youth unemployment.

Denying young people their rights — such as the right to decent work or the right to seek and express their sexual or cultural identity — places our future at risk. This is a question of human dignity and world security. Increasing employment opportunities for young people not only addresses the primary concern of young people throughout the world, but also contributes to more sustainable, equal development.

Millennium Development Goal 8 seeks to develop and implement strategies designed to create decent and productive work for young people and is one of the quick wins for achieving the Goals. Youth employment is also a priority area in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

We are not asking that members sign new agreements or declare new intentions, but we need them to act.

Governments alone cannot do the job, but must cooperate with micro-financing institutions, entrepreneurs, civil society and, last but definitely not least, young people themselves. Research by the International Labour Organization indicates that young entrepreneurs have a significantly higher than average success rate and a positive track record in paying off microcredit loans. The United Nations proclaimed 2005 the International Year of Microcredit. Young people should be a target group for microfinance projects and institutions.

Several initiatives inspired me this year, such as the Youth Employment Spark project — a youth-led network for young entrepreneurs that helps young people to learn from one other and inspire others to take positive action. Such examples are proof that the Millennium Development Goals are within reach and that young people themselves, if given the chance, have a great deal to contribute.

I would like to underline the importance of having more youth representatives at this session of the General Assembly than ever before. Not only are we experts on issues concerning youth; we are the best placed to explain decisions taken and to bring positive messages to our peers at home. I would like to thank the Member States that give young people opportunities for meaningful participation, and I urge Member States to include youth representatives in all relevant discussions of the General Assembly and other forums.

Young people call on Member States to promote initiatives to increase universal access to financial services, including microcredit, and support networks for young entrepreneurs; learn from and support important global initiatives, such as the Youth Employment Network and the Youth Employment Summit; and translate and implement United Nations resolutions, such as the World Programme of Action for Youth, into national action plans.

(*spoke in French*)

> "So you see, if we sacrifice or risk our lives, it is because we in Africa have suffered too long and need your help."

(*spoke in English*)

I can only hope that I have contributed to ensuring that Yaguine and Fodé did not die in vain. Can we act as an international community, hold ourselves accountable for the many great promises and resolutions made here, restore our faith in this institution and have hope for a better future? Yes, we can. We, the young people, stand ready to do so.

Ms. Ahmed (Bangladesh): I speak on behalf of my Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Mr. Iftekhar Chowdhury.

Youth are the catalyst for change and development. The spirit of youth can and must be converted into a tool for change and progress. The participation of youth representatives in this debate has given us the opportunity to hear them and listen to their experience at first hand.

Bangladesh remains fully committed to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We pay due attention to all matters concerning youth, particularly the unemployed segment of our young population. We emphasize the 10 priority areas identified by the World Programme of Action for Youth and the five additional issues of concern acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 58/133 of 2003. We attach necessary attention to the proper education, employment creation, health care facilities, skill development and various vocational trainings, entrepreneurship and awareness programmes for our youth. Special emphasis has also been placed on promoting and ensuring the active participation of girls and young women.

Bangladesh adopted a national youth policy in 2003. It defines the population in the age group from 18 to 35 as youth. As per that definition, we have roughly 45 million youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has a department devoted solely to youth development. Our aim is to transform our young population into an organized, disciplined and productive workforce. The Department of Youth Development coordinates various programmes. While implementing those programmes, the Government

maintains close collaboration with the non-governmental organizations.

Bangladesh has taken numerous positive steps to mainstream its young population. First, we have improvised a set of skill development programmes that include computer and information technologies, electronics, garments, agriculture, secretarial sciences, and so on.

Secondly, we have developed self-employment programmes, including motivation training, group formation, credit and input support, close supervision and development of marketing networks, and so on.

Thirdly, the Government has introduced an initiative called "Family-Based Employment Programme" which provides microcredits to youth towards the establishment microenterprises. Under the programme, young people are also being trained in small-family norms, malnutrition, sanitation, tree planting, and so on. More than 65,000 young people have been given loans from the Credit Fund and the realization of loans is nearly 89 per cent.

Fourthly, we have projects to involve young people in such activities as population control, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health care and safe motherhood. The United Nations Population Fund is providing assistance in those projects.

Last but not least, various local youth clubs, supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, play a very significant role in community development, raising awareness and various self-employment schemes.

South Asia has the largest number of youth living below the two poverty lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. In order to make progress in the world youth situation, we need to take account of the needs of South Asian youth, which includes about 9.9 million young people in my country. My delegation acknowledges that mainstreaming youth in the process of poverty eradication is a complex challenge that requires our continuous attention and action.

It is easy sometimes to overlook our youth, but we do so at our great peril. Societies that are able to tap the potential of youth are better adjusted to achieving progress, development and, indeed, prosperity. None of us can begrudge attention to youth, for however distant and remote it may seem, all present are either young now or were young once.

Mr. Ronnholm (Finland): As a youth representative from Finland, it is an honour for me to address this Assembly.

We are here to review the situation of youth and achievements attained in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth 10 years after its adoption. I am delighted to see more youth representatives here at the United Nations highest decision-making body than ever before. However, more than 100 Member States still have not provided the voices of their youth the opportunity to be heard at this forum, in spite of the fact that the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions calling for the inclusion of youth representatives in Member States' delegations. True representation, however, can be achieved only when democratically chosen bodies representing different youth interests, such as national youth councils, conduct the selection of youth representatives.

General Assembly resolutions also recommend that young people be directly involved in decision-making processes. Youth-led development should be promoted at all levels. Young people should take responsibility for developing their own societies.

The World Programme of Action for Youth provides a very good basis for any country to develop a national youth policy. However, there is a need to strengthen the authority of the document. General awareness of the World Programme needs to be greatly increased. Youth organizations need to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Programme. There is also a need to find accurate indicators for monitoring the impact of the Programme. One solution is to choose indicators applied in the compiling of the *Human Development Index* that are suitable for youth issues and use them in analysing data for monitoring. The monitoring could be delegated to national youth councils — with the appropriate funding — to provide an adequate overall picture of the situation of young people in the State in question.

As a youth representative, I strongly recommend that a special United Nations taskforce be established to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the World Programme of Action in order to make reporting official and efficient. The Programme should also be seen as a tool for reaching the Millennium

Development Goals. Although the Programme is not a legally binding document in itself, many of the important issues addressed therein — such as the right to health and employment issues — are already included in existing, legally binding international instruments.

It is time for us all to act. We all know what to do, so now let us please do it. While celebrating its tenth anniversary, the World Programme of Action for Youth is getting rid of its "paediatric" problems. It is becoming a strong and independent teenager who has hopefully found its place in the United Nations family. And as a demanding teenager, questioning the status quo and demanding change, it should continue to do so in the future.

The Acting President: I should like to inform the General Assembly that the representatives of Ghana, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have requested to participate in this meeting. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed at 11 a.m. this morning, may I ask the General Assembly whether there is any objection to including those delegations in the list of speakers?

As I hear none, Ghana, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are included in the list of speakers.

U Win Mra (Myanmar): As we gather here today to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, I wish first of all to thank Mr. Eliasson for the efforts he has made in the preparations for holding this important event. I wish also to express our gratitude to the Secretariat for the crucial role it has played.

The World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted in 1995, focused on 10 priority areas. Although there have been many economic and social changes in the global environment in the past decade, we strongly believe that those 10 priority areas continue to be very relevant today and will remain relevant in the future. My delegation is of the view that the global community should concentrate more on achieving the existing goals which we set for ourselves in 1995. Additional challenges faced by today's youth could be streamlined into the existing 10 priority areas, since they are interconnected.

Poverty lies at the centre of the 10 priority areas. Quality education, quality health care, decent employment, leisure for youth, and other goals cannot be fully realized if poverty prevails in a society. The Secretary-General reports that 85 per cent of the world's youth live in the developing world and that 208.6 million youth in the world today exist on less than $1 a day, while 515.1 million live on less than $2 a day. Given such a scenario, we are of the view that the focus should remain on poverty alleviation. We join the call of the Secretary-General, who suggests the need for quantitative and qualitative research on poverty alleviation among youth. The idea put forward by many youth organizations — to support the development of a global youth development index — also deserves merit and consideration.

We strongly believe that education is the primary solution to poverty alleviation. By investing in the youth of today, we can build a better tomorrow. The Secretary-General reports that secondary school gross enrolments on a global level increased from 56 to 78 per cent in the last decade and that tertiary enrolment rates increased worldwide from 69 million in 1990 to 88 million in 1997. However, despite such increases, the Secretary-General reports that the gap between male and female literacy rates in Asia and Africa appears to be widening. We call for additional international efforts to better educate girls and women.

Modern concepts of learning, such as distance education and "e-learning", have opened up a new dimension of learning to better ensure that no child or youth is left out. At the same time, the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries must not be overlooked. In Myanmar, through strong commitment and concerted efforts, the literacy rate for youth aged 15 to 24 years increased from 80.9 per cent in 1990 to 96.5 per cent in 2004.

The Secretary-General has reported that, while the number of youth in secondary and tertiary education has increased, labour markets in many countries are not able to accommodate those large groups of skilled graduates.

We are of the view that enhanced market access, sustainably financed technical assistance and capacity-building programmes for developing countries would help create jobs. Outsourcing to developing countries is also a viable solution for the creation of jobs without causing a brain drain.

Youth participation in civil society activities is beneficial in many ways. It fosters intergenerational relations, prevents displacement of traditional

activities, limits the chances of engagement in risky behaviour, promotes volunteer activities and gives young people the chance to build networks among themselves. In Myanmar, the youth wing of the Union Solidarity and Development Association, plays a crucial role in the lives of Myanmar youth today. The Association holds various courses for human resource development at all levels, encourages volunteerism, enhances youth engagement and provides forums for intergenerational discussions.

The World Youth Report draws our attention to the fact that drugs, tobacco and alcohol are means of escaping situations that youth often feel powerless to change, and it identifies tobacco use as one of the chief preventable causes of death in the world today. Aggressive advertising and marketing of alcohol and tobacco has resulted in growing alcohol and drug abuse among the targeted audience: youth. Myanmar became a party to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in October 2003, and it has imposed restrictions on tobacco advertising and marketing. Information on the hazards of tobacco is included in the school curriculum, and many schools have been declared tobacco-free.

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. I conclude by reaffirming my Government's commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and to building a peaceful, just and stable environment for our youth.

Ms. Uwonkunda (Norway): Please allow me to start my statement by bringing a message from a girl who was not given the opportunity to be here, but who has an important message.

> "I still get bad dreams and wake up screaming. Even when I am not asleep, I get bad dreams. I hear rebels threatening to kill me. I see a long line of frightened children tied with ropes and hear rebels ordering to kill them. At night, I do not want to see flashes of torches. They remind me of the night I was abducted."

Those are the words of 13-year-old Pamela from northern Uganda, and that is the reality of thousands of children.

I was the same age as 13-year-old Pamela when I myself faced the greatest tragedy of my life as a young refugee from Rwanda. But despite our sharing the same destiny, her tragedy is far greater than mine.

As a young refugee of 13 due to war in Rwanda, I was forced to grow up unbelievably fast. I did not have a choice, and neither did any of the others with whom I spent the first three nights in a roundabout in Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It was not until December 1997 that I could finally sit and relax, that I could finally sleep and wake up without nightmares. For the first time in a long time, I saw my parents at ease, with no worry for our security or about how to put food on the table. Not everyone got the same chance my family did.

Norway fully supports the World Youth Report's demand for special attention to integrating youth who are victims of armed conflicts. But it is important that the need for special attention be recognized in the countries of origin as well as in the countries of asylum. The World Youth Report describes the relationship between a refugee's situation and the probability of poverty, drug abuse, trafficking, violence, dropping out of school and exposure to physical suffering and psychological damage.

Children and youth who flee and seek asylum in safe countries have special needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children who seek asylum must receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. When unaccompanied minors arrive in host countries, they are often treated the same way as adults. But they need special treatment, adapted information and the appointment of a guardian to be responsible for providing help and assistance.

Receiving young refugees is not just a burden. Refugee children have ideas, experiences, knowledge and an abundance of resources. The asylum State must succeed in integrating young refugees to be able to take advantage of the resources of those children and young people. We simply cannot afford to lose them or see them drop out. In fact, if States fail to integrate asylum-seekers and refugees, they risk creating a new lower class. Young people and youth non-governmental organizations should be seen as tools and partners in integration processes.

We urge the States that have not done so to ratify and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We urge all States to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national law and to comply with its obligations. We urge all States to see young refugees as valuable resources and to develop integration programmes for young refugees. We urge

the United Nations to focus on the situation of young refugees and internally displaced persons in the next World Youth Report on youth at risk.

My own story ended very well, but Pamela did not get the second chance I got. For her and millions of other children and young people, we have to work together to find a solution. That requires time and resources that I know we possess. Let us make it a priority.

Mr. Kutlualp (Turkey): It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to address the General Assembly in my capacity as youth delegate from Turkey at this meeting on the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

This special occasion not only enables young people from numerous Member States to make their voices heard but also creates an opportunity for Governments to recognize and fully realize the potential of youth, especially in matters of direct concern to young people.

Beyond doubt, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond has served as a key document in the formulation of policy on issues regarding youth. Certain progress has been achieved in priority areas defined by the World Programme of Action. However, serious challenges remain.

We believe that the key to success in achieving the goals defined by the Programme of Action is the involvement of youth, both in decision-making and implementation processes. Assigning certain responsibilities will help young people play a more significant role in society as active partners. Cooperation and collaboration between Governments and civil society organizations are also crucial for success.

Turkey has achieved important progress in areas of policy priority addressed in the World Programme of Action. Education, health, environment and, especially, girls and young women are some of the areas in which promising progress has been made. The success achieved in raising awareness of gender issues and the sustained efforts for increasing the schooling rate of girls deserve particular attention.

The activities of civil society on youth issues in Turkey are also commendable. Among those activities, the establishment in 2004 of the Local Agenda 21 Youth Parliament should be underlined. That event, which coincided with the official Youth Day of Turkey, 19 May, brought together 297 youth delegates from all over the country.

We see the World Programme of Action as a living document. Therefore, we welcome the inclusion of the five additional priority areas, namely, the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; the use of and access to information and communication technologies; the dramatic increase of HIV infections among young people and the impact of the epidemic on their lives; the involvement of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators; and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society. It is with this understanding that we have joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/60/L.2, on policies and programmes involving youth.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to express my sincere hope that the number of occasions providing youth delegates with the opportunity to participate in the work of the United Nations will continuously increase. We believe that the participation of young delegates not only enriches the debate and the policy dialogue, but also strengthens existing channels of communication and cooperation among Governments and, most important, young people.

Mr. Blake (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his lucid and candid World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*). We also wish to extend our congratulations to the President and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

Since the genesis of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 1995, little progress has been realized in the 10 major areas outlined as priority areas. My delegation concurs with the findings of World Youth Report 2005, which posits that one of the pitfalls in the implementation of the Programme of Action was that a formal mechanism for quantifying progress or regress was not implemented. We are challenging the United Nations to develop an index and, further, to establish a committee with a special portfolio to conduct continuous evaluation.

The World Programme of Action for Youth has failed to adequately address the core issues related to intergenerational relations because, irrespective of the changed and still changing structure, the family remains the primary social institution, as pointed out by the World Youth Report. Youth development must

be viewed in the context of benefits to current and future generations. Caribbean Governments have found it difficult to keep the family in place as the basic building block of Caribbean cosmopolitan society, and recent studies on the regional situation have noted that many of the problems facing young people can be attributed, among other things, to a combination of three crucial shortcomings: failure to recognize the importance of the nuclear family, failure to maintain monogamous relations and the failure of males to remain on par with females in the areas of education and employment.

One of the criticisms levelled against the World Programme of Action by the World Youth Report is that policymakers have failed to adequately address youth participation and to support sustained youth involvement, resulting in a failure to incorporate the ideas and perspectives of young people. In my own country, Jamaica, in accordance with the mandates of the 1994 National Youth Policy, a National Centre for Youth Development has been established as an official agency with responsibility for policy formulation, strategic planning, research, monitoring and evaluation. The significant feature of this agency is that it is led and completely staffed by fully qualified young professionals. In addition, as our Government seeks to transform our educational system to ensure that Jamaica achieves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education, the participation of youth has been a critical feature of the task force on education charged with providing recommendations and the committee with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating implementation.

My delegation therefore strongly recommends that the United Nations seek as a matter of urgency to institutionalize the participation and involvement of youth through the establishment and full support of permanent youth representatives to the United Nations for every nation as part of a United Nations youth ambassadors programme. The work of the United Nations is a process, and hence meaningful youth participation cannot be achieved by the invitation to nations to send youth delegates to attend one-off meetings of the General Assembly. Additionally, if the participation of youth is to amount to more than mere tokenism, officials at the highest levels of the United Nations must engage youth delegates in meaningful dialogue. Thus, we further recommend that United Nations establish a special committee comprising the proposed permanent youth representatives. Further, the Organization should hold true to the principle of co-management and move at full speed to appoint and support a shadow youth secretary-general, who would work on a full-time basis with the Secretary-General and be charged with ensuring that the priorities of the World Programme of Action for Youth are indeed addressed.

According to the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, "it is not that we embrace globalization, but it is globalization which embraces us". Consequently, in any meaningful evaluation of the World Programme of Action, the dynamics of globalization and its impact on youth development must be taken into account. As many developing countries struggle to achieve economic growth within the new globalized economy, many of the resources that would normally be invested in youth development programmes are being diverted to service debt repayments.

Globalization is the single largest factor which has the potential to redistribute resources away from the poor to the rich. Such an argument ought not to be obfuscated with emotionalism, but should be viewed against the startling reality that young people constitute about 18 per cent of the approximately 2 billion people or approximately 33 per cent of the world's population who live in countries that do not benefit from the so-called merits of globalization. Most of these youths are to be found in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and the former Soviet Union.

Finally, speaking within the context of developing countries, we wish to emphasize the alarming reality of youth unemployment. There are over 88 million youth unemployed worldwide and millions more who are underemployed. Globalization has caused drastic shifts in the job market, and technological innovation has changed the scope of the market. This is significant, considering the nature of emerging economies. We acknowledge that job markets have improved in a very small number of developing countries such as China and India. However, in the vast majority of developing States the job market has contracted due to, inter alia: a reduction in Government employment as a result of tight fiscal policies brought about in order to protect the value of national currency against international speculation, reduction in private sector employment in response to competition from cheaper imports and difficulty of entry and competition

in export markets. This contraction of the job market has had a greater impact on youth than on adults.

As one positive response to addressing youth unemployment at home, we are pleased to be one of the latest countries to join the Youth Employment Network as a lead country. We look forward to engaging in exchanges with other countries in this important mechanism. We therefore call for fairer rules to govern international business and trade, in particular measures to cushion the impacts of adverse changes.

It is now 2005. Where are we now? In what direction are our faces turned? It is time for action. We all know what to do. Please let us do it.

In the race towards the finish line to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, let us remember that a young man from Jamaica has shown the world that you can finish a 100-metre sprint in 9.77 seconds. Let us sprint towards the achievement of the Millennium Goals, and not jog as though it were a marathon.

Ms. Vegas Guerrero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to represent Peru and to transmit our warm greetings as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

We must briefly ask ourselves, as we have done in Peru, whether we have much to celebrate. To be sure, we in Peru have been making considerable effort to include youth in public policy that concerns them. For us, this means reviewing and realizing that poverty indicators have not decreased and that 52 per cent of the 7.5 million young people in Peru live in poverty. It is also true that indicators concerning early adolescent pregnancy and first-time maternal mortality among adolescent and young women have not yet decreased. But we must point out here that there is a similar situation in many developing countries. It is also important to stress that what we are doing in Peru to integrate young people into society, and not only by promoting their participation. Many approaches involve only the participation of youth, merely by inviting them to activities and then listening to them.

The Government of Peru has a clear commitment to involve young people as strategic stakeholders in development. We have a youth commission in the national Congress, the legislative power in Peru. It was established just four years ago, and is discovering how to go about its work — through regulations and legislation to ensure the development and inclusion of young people. In the executive branch there is a ministerial-level National Youth Commission. It does not compete with other ministries, but ensures that specific ministries — for example, the ministries for education, labour, health, social development, economy and finance — include a youth dimension in their own development policies in the context of national, regional and local government.

Likewise, regional and local governments are providing opportunities for dialogue between the Government and young people and their organizations. In Peru, youth are reluctant to participate in politics, because they are disillusioned, as is often the case in other countries, about political involvement and about politicians.

At the same time, we have a large number of young people who are participating in elections. In fact, 32 per cent of our population between 18 and 29 years of age participates in elections and will elect future Governments. They have important political decisions to make. I would also like to say that institutions in Peru are actively trying to incorporate youth in Government policies. We want youth issues to be part not just of current Government policy but of national policy.

At the international level, Peru is making a strong commitment through the Ibero-American Youth Organization, the only organization that brings together national youth ministries and agencies in Latin America. Peru currently has the challenge and honour of presiding over that organization.

I would like to mention the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, which we shall sign at Badajoz, Spain, on 10 October 2005. There, 21 Ibero-American countries will meet to sign the first international instrument for the rights of young people — which we bring to the attention of all countries. It seeks to ensure that policies of signatory Governments will promote genuine inclusion of young people.

It is important to speak of youth seriously, not using cheap politics or welfare policies. We need to make sure that youth organizations are truly seen as stakeholders in the development of our countries — but not only by inviting them and by asking them to join us. We want youth to be included in our countries' policies. We need young people to believe in

participating, as leaders, in our countries' politics. They are future presidents and future regional and local leaders.

I call upon everyone to continue believing in young people not only as the future of our countries but also as their present. Youth represent not only future political leaders; they are our immediate future and our hope for sustainable development and, of course, for the elimination of the poverty that afflicts many of our countries.

My thanks and congratulations go to the youth delegates who are here to represent so many of the world's countries.

Mr. Hajiyev (Azerbaijan): As a youth delegate from Azerbaijan at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, it is a great honour for me to be here and to address the Assembly today on the occasion of the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Since adoption of that Programme in 1995, our world has changed significantly. The time therefore has come to rethink the old agenda and to start looking upon things in a bold new way. Poverty represents serious threat to the security and well-being of young generations. It deprives young people of education and employment and often makes them victims of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. To a large extent, only low paid and insecure jobs with limited possibilities for advancement are available to the young generations.

Young people, with their enormous untapped potential, can make their own important contribution to poverty reduction. Rather than being viewed as a target group for which employment must be found, young people want to be accepted as partners for development. According to statistical data, only a small percentage of youth across the globe is able to find the necessary funding to start up their own businesses and to involve themselves and other young men and women in entrepreneurship. However, if Governments employ specific programmes to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship at the national level, we will succeed in significantly reducing youth unemployment. Furthermore, national youth-led business funds could be established in order to provide necessary assistance to young entrepreneurs.

I am pleased to represent here one of the leading countries of the Youth Employment Network, a major international initiative to address the challenge of youth employment globally. Azerbaijan, as one of the first countries to join the Network, has recently adopted a youth policy in the form of the State Programme for Youth 2005-2009, which views the promotion of youth employment and youth entrepreneurship among its key policy directions. The programme envisages adoption of a national action plan on youth employment by 2006 and preparation of measures to promote youth entrepreneurship in remote areas and to improve the training and education of young people in this area.

I am also happy to note the achievements of other leading countries of the Network, such as Brazil, Indonesia, Namibia, Senegal and others, which have also undertaken measures to promote youth employment in their respective countries, including the adoption of national action plans. As a youth representative, I fully support these actions and hope that all Member States can learn from the results achieved so far by the Youth Employment Network, and especially from best practices provided by lead countries.

Another formidable challenge the young people of Azerbaijan continue to face is the ongoing armed conflict with Armenia, which has a detrimental impact on youth and significantly limits prospects for their full-scale development. As a result of this conflict, generations of young Azerbaijani women and men have grown up in refugee and internally displaced persons camps. We, as youth representatives of Azerbaijan, believe that the young generations of both countries can contribute tremendously to the solution of the conflict; this is vital for the security and development of our region. We hope that the Armenian side will demonstrate the same constructive approach towards that end.

We are grateful that, in both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting (*resolution 60/1*), youth concerns have been taken into account to a certain extent. However, this is not enough. Around the world, the contributions that young people are already making to achieving the Millennium Development Goals should be further acknowledged and strengthened. Youth needs to be part of the discussion and decisions shaping our world for our common future. It is

therefore crucial to involve them in the design and implementation of various development programmes and policies, in particular those targeting young people.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Azerbaijan and the United Nations for providing me with the opportunity to speak here today. I hope that more and more younger people, from all countries, especially those from developing countries and countries in transition, will be able to participate in future sessions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies and will eventually become real and active partners of Governments in realizing the global goals and commitments before us.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.